

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01 EB-11

COME-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15

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R 221125Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3259

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSYHVEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

DOD WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5527

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, ETRN, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT DESIRE ESTABLISH REGIONAL

COMMERCIAL AVIATION AND NAVAL REPAIR AND

MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AT BIZERTE

REF: TUNIS 4834

1. HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR. TOLD ME SEPT. 19 THAT ON BEHALF OF
TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT HE HAD INVITED LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES
TO VISIT TUNISIA IN EFFORT TO INDUCE LOCKHEED TO ESTABLISH

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REGIONAL REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AT BIZERTE.

AT FIRST OPERATIONS WOULD INVOLVE AVIATION REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE. THIS WOULD INCLUDE TUNISIAN AIR FORCE AND AIR TUNIS. HE SAID HE WAS ALREADY MAKING EFFORTS TO ARRANGE FOR AIR TUNIS TO ACCEPT THIS PROPOSITION. FOR FACILITY TO BE PROFITABLE IT WOULD NEED TO BE REGIONAL AND, HOPEFULLY, OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING U.S. WOULD AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS FACILITY. BOURGUIBA, JR. CLAIMED THAT LIBYANS HAD INDICATED INTEREST IN USING FACILITY FOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF LIBYAN MIRAGES. HE SAID THAT EVENTUALLY GOT EXPECTED LOCKHEED WOULD EXPAND OPERATION TO INCLUDE NAVAL REPAIR FACILITIES. IN THIS CONNECTION HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE POSSIBILITIES FOR UTILIZATION BY SIXTH FLEET.

2. BOURGUIBA, JR. SAID THAT FOREGOING PROPOSITION FLOWED FROM PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S INTEREST IN TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EXISTING FACILITIES AT BIZERTE. HE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD COMMENTED TO FORMER AMBASSADOR RUSSELL DURING PALACE LUNCHEON LAST JUNE THAT HE HOPED U.S. NAVY WOULD USE BIZERTE. BOURGUIBA, JR. SAID THAT HE HAD CALLED PRESIDENT'S ATTENTION TO POLITICAL STIGMA THAT WOULD BE ATTACHED TO APPEARING TO RECREATE BIZERTE AS "FOREIGN MILITARY BASE". THEREFORE, HE HAD COME UP WITH IDEA OF CREATING COMMERCIAL-RUN RATHER THAN MILITARY-OPERATED FACILITY AT BIZERTE.

3. BOURGUIBA, JR. SAID THAT HE WOULD BE VISITING U.S. IN OCTOBER IN CONNECTION WITH SNI MATTERS AND WHILE THERE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARIES NEWSOM AND SISCO TO DISCUSS HIS REGIONAL REPAIR FACILITY PROPOSAL. HE SAID HE WOULD ALSO BE PLEASED TO SEE SECRETARY KISSINGER IF THIS WERE AT ALL POSSIBLE. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT BOTH ASSISTANT SECRETARIES WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE HIM. I WAS GLAD THAT TUNISIAN PROPOSAL FOR USE OF BIZERTE FACILITIES HAD BEEN CLARIFIED. COMMERCIAL-OPERATED FACILITY SEEMED LIKE GOOD IDEA IF IT COULD ATTRACT ENOUGH BUSINESS. INVITATION TO LOCKHEED IS CONSISTENT WITH USG DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE GREATER AMERICAN PRIVATE INVESTMENT AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IN TUNISIA.

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5. ON SEPTEMBER 20 I MET WITH LOCKHEED REPRESENTATIVES. THEY REPORTED THAT BOURGUIBA, JR. AND OTHER TUNISIAN OFFICIALS WITH WHOM THEY HAD SPOKEN WERE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT PROPOSAL. BOURGUIBA, JR. HAD TOLD THEM THAT ONE OF PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES FOR BIZERTE FACILITY IS TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN TECHNICAL SKILLS OF YOUNG TUNISIANS. IN THE PROCESS IT IS HOPED TO ATTRACT BACK TO TUNISIA SKILLED AND SEMI-SKILLED TUNISIAN WORKERS NOW EMPLOYED ABROAD. LOCKHEED

REPRESENTATIVES SAID THAT THEY ARE IN PROCESS OF DRAWING OF FEASIBILITY STUDY, WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE COMPLETED IN JANUARY. THEY INDICATED RECOGNITION OF NEED, PARTICULARLY AT OUTSET, TO EMPHASIZE TRAINING COMPONENT. THUS, OVER FIRST FIVE YEARS MOST OF LOCKHEED EFFORTS WOULD BE DEVOTED TO TRAINING, ALTHOUGH SOME REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WOULD BE CARRIED ON. LOCKHEED PREPARED INVEST MONEY IF ITS STUDY PROVES PROJECT ECONOMICALLY SOUND. REPRESENTATIVES THOUGHT THAT BIZERTE FACILITY WOULD BE COMPLEMENTARY TO RATHER THAN DUPLICATIVE OF MAJOR DEPOT FACILITY BEING PROMOTED BY LOCKHEED IN GREECE.

6. COMMENT: ASIDE FROM OPPORTUNITY OFFERED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF MAJOR AMERICAN COMMERCIAL PRESENCE IN TUNISIA, BIZERTE PROPOSAL WOULD: (1) PROVIDE IMPORTANT TECHNICAL TRAINING FACILITY FOR TUNISIANS; (2) PROVIDE MORE JOBS; (3) SERVE AS SHOT-IN-ARM TO BIZERTE AREA AND BE HELPFUL TO TUNISIAN ECONOMY AS A WHOLE; AND (4) UTILIZE EXISTING AIR AND NAVAL FACILITIES WHICH HAVE BEEN UNDER-UTILIZED SINCE FRENCH DEPARTURE FROM BIZERTE IN 1961. QUITE CLEARLY, BOURGUIBA, JR. IS HOPING THAT SIXTH FLEET CAN USE FACILITIES IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO VIABILITY OF OPERATION. FACT THAT FACILITY WOULD BE OPERATED ON COMMERCIAL BASIS AND WOULD BE OPEN TO ALL COMERS, WOULD MINIMIZE RISK TO TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT OF BEING STIGMATIZED POLITICALLY IN EVENT BIZERTE WERE USED BY U.S. OR OTHER MILITARY. WE HAVE SOME RESERVATIONS AS TO WHETHER GOT WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP BIZERTE INTO ECONOMICALLY VIABLE REGIONAL DEPOT. FACILITY, SERVING TUNISIA ONLY, GIVEN HIGH COST OF LOCKHEED CONTRACT, IS UNLIKELY TO BE ECONOMICALLY WORKABLE. NOT CERTAIN WHETHER REGIONAL BUSINESS CAN BE DEVELOPED. NEVERTHELESS, I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD DISCOURAGE TUNISIANS, AND I HOPE THAT

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DURING BOURGUIBA, JR.'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON HE CAN BE GIVEN SOME INDICATION RE WHETHER SIXTH FLEET MIGHT EVENTUALLY WANT TO AVAIL ITSELF OF THIS FACILITY.

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